sumably as an act of piety. How many years before these specimens the art originated we do not know—possibly as early as the Sui. Apparently it was an evolution, conceivably—although by no means certainly—from the use of seals. It was to have a noteworthy development in China, and as late as the close of the eighteenth century the Empire possibly contained more printed books than all the rest of the world put together.

ECONOMIC LIFE

One would like to know something of the life of the toiling masses of the T'ang—the way in which they made a livelihood, and their agricultural and industrial organization. Some fragments of information are accessible to us, but we still lack adequate monographs on the subject. We know that under the first Emperor of the dynasty a redistribution of land was ordered, with an attempt to equalize the holdings. We know, too, that efforts were made again and again to prevent the sale of these holdings, and so to forestall the growth of large landed estates. The system inevitably broke down and complaints were later repeatedly registered of landless poor against wealthy landowners. However, peasant proprietorship seems to have been fairly general. We hear of governmental promotion of irrigation canals. We read of movements to disband part of the army and to move the soldiers back to the land. We have records of many famines—even before the declining years of the dynasty—and often the government sought to give relief by distributing food and remitting taxes. Taxes were of many kinds, some of them based on the land and some on trade and commodities. At times they were very heavy.

Standard forms long in use under the T'ang were a land tax, a levy in kind on each family (chiefly for town-dwellers), and required labor—which might be compounded by the payment of silk. Toward the close of the eighth century a statesman, Yang Yen, substituted for all these a single tax on the land, payable twice a year, a practice which was reverted to under later dynasties. Early in the eighth century a standing, mercenary army was substituted, at least for the time, for military conscription.

There were currency troubles, with debased coinage and attempts to improve it. Gresham's Law operated—long before it was so named—the poorer money driving the better out of circulation.